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SUBJECT: SENEGAL CONDEMNS ISRAELI ACTIONS IN GAZA

¶1. (SBU) Summary. The Government of Senegal has firmly and repeatedly condemned the recent actions of the government of Israel in the Gaza strip. On January 3, President Abdoulaye Wade, current Chairman of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), condemned the Israeli incursion into Gaza and called for the immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces. On December 28, 2008 Wade issued a statement condemning the Israeli defense forces' bombing of targets in Gaza (see para 6 for unofficial translation of statement). Also on December 28, Foreign Minister Cheikh Tidiane Gadio issued a press release describing Wade's telephone conversation with Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal regarding the President's proposals for bringing about a ceasefire (see para 7). On December 30, Foreign Minister Gadio told Charge and Political Counselor that the United States has an obligation to stop the violence. On January 4, Wade announced his intention to travel to the Middle East to attempt mediation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. End summary.

Wade Condemns Israeli Actions and Announces Peace Efforts

¶2. (U) President Wade, who serves as the titular head of the Islamic ummah as a result of hosting the most recent OIC Summit, said that the Israeli incursion was "completely unjustified and unacceptable." Moreover, "Senegal and the OIC insist that Israel withdraw immediately and without condition from the Palestinian territory putting an end to the invasion and air raids," he added.

¶3. (U) On January 4, President Wade announced that he is planning a mediation trip to the Middle East in reaction to the Israeli actions in the Gaza Strip. According to Wade, he has "longstanding invitations" from the government of Israel and the Palestinian authorities. In addition to visiting Israel and the occupied territories, he said his trip will take him to Amman to engage in talks with the King of Jordan.

Foreign Minister: USG Must Accept Burden of Leadership

¶4. (SBU) On December 30, during a meeting with Charge and Political Counselor, Foreign Minister Gadio vigorously condemned the Israeli bombing of Hamas targets in Gaza as a disproportionate response to the threat of Palestinian rocket attacks on Israel. While acknowledging that Israel has a right to defend itself and averring that "We understand Israel's problem," he said Israel's actions and the U.S. response were unacceptable to Senegal and the Islamic ummah. Gadio criticized the U.S. call for Israel to "avoid civilian casualties." Asking rhetorically if we knew how such a statement sounds to Muslim and Arab ears, the Foreign Minister suggested that it amounted to little more than a green light for Israel. Gadio called on the USG to work toward stopping the violence, saying the United States has the benefits of being the leader of the world and must also accept the burdens of that leadership.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: President Wade has for some time now been attempting to become more involved in the Middle East peace process.

While it appears that the Palestinians might welcome such a move, it is less clear that the government of Israel would do the same.
End comment.

16. (U) Statement by President Wade:

Begin text:

President Abdoulaye Wade
Chair of The Islamic Conference Organization
and President of the Republic of Senegal
December 28, 2008

The indiscriminate air strikes conducted by Israel against the population of Gaza, without sparing children or women, killing 260 people and causing several hundred casualties are unprecedented in regional conflicts and cannot be justified by rocket launches by Hamas across the border. These strikes are simply unacceptable as stressed by all capitals of the world.

Israel is threatening to conduct a land invasion of the Palestinian territory of Gaza, which has no legal basis in International Law, it could go beyond responding to rocket launches and would simply and clearly be an invasion that would lead to more deaths and wounded as well as massive destruction.

The incumbent Chair of The Islamic Conference Organization demands that Israel ends immediately their strikes and refrains from launching any new attacks against the Palestinian territory.

He also appeals to the International Community, to the Secretary General of the United Nations and to the Security Council to demand from Israel an immediate end of the indiscriminate air bombing

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against the people of Palestine, and calls for the two parties, Israel and Hamas, to immediately observe a cease-fire.

He calls for the Group of member states of the Islamic Conference Organization in Geneva to request from the Human Rights Council to convene immediately a special session on the grave situation prevailing in Gaza.

He calls upon Egypt to open the Rafah corridor for fast delivery of the humanitarian and medical assistance that are urgently needed by the people of Gaza.

The incumbent chair requests the Secretary General of the Islamic Conference Organization to call a meeting in Jeddah, as soon as possible, of all Ambassadors of member states with the agenda to prepare an immediate meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs.

End text.

17. (U) Statement by Foreign Minister Gadio:

Begin text:

Press release by the Minister of Foreign Affairs

Re: Telephone conversation between President Wade and Khaled Meshaal (Leader of Hamas)

On Sunday, December 28, during a telephone conversation that took place at 21:00 GMT, President Abdoulaye Wade, Chair of the Islamic Conference Organization, made a proposal to bring about an immediate end of the ongoing crisis. Mr. Khaled Meshaal, Leader of Hamas deemed the proposal balanced and welcomed it favorably.

The proposal consists in obtaining a definitive truce between Israel and Hamas through the signing of an agreement that commits Hamas to immediately observe a cease fire and in return Israel would observe a cease fire coupled with an ending of the blockade of Gaza.

The Leader of Hamas expressed his willingness to sign such an accord at a place to be commonly determined by the two parties.

Dakar, December 28, 2008

The Press and Information Office
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the
Republic of Senegal

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